

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI
NORTHERN DIVISION

WILLIAM K. COLE,)
Plaintiff,)
v.) No. 2:14CV0008 SPM
TYLER J. MASSEY, et al.,)
Defendants.)

MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

This matter is before the Court upon the motion of William Cole (registration no. 1002523), an inmate at Jefferson City Correctional Center, for leave to commence this action without payment of the required filing fee. For the reasons stated below, the Court finds that plaintiff does not have sufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee and will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$4.40. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). Additionally, the Court finds that the complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, but the Court will give plaintiff an opportunity to file an amended complaint.

28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1)

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1), a prisoner bringing a civil action in forma pauperis is required to pay the full amount of the filing fee. If the prisoner has insufficient funds in his or her prison account to pay the entire fee, the Court must assess and, when funds exist, collect an initial partial filing fee of 20 percent of the greater of (1) the average monthly deposits in the prisoner's account, or (2) the average monthly balance in the prisoner's account for the prior six-month period. After payment of the initial partial filing fee, the prisoner is required to make monthly payments of 20 percent of the preceding month's income credited to the prisoner's account. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). The agency having custody of the prisoner will forward these

monthly payments to the Clerk of Court each time the amount in the prisoner's account exceeds \$10, until the filing fee is fully paid. Id.

Plaintiff has submitted an affidavit and a certified copy of his prison account statement for the six-month period immediately preceding the submission of his complaint. A review of plaintiff's account indicates an average monthly deposit of \$22.00, and an average monthly balance of less than \$22.00. Plaintiff has insufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee. Accordingly, the Court will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$4.40, which is 20 percent of plaintiff's average monthly deposit.

28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court must dismiss a complaint filed in forma pauperis if the action is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. An action is frivolous if it "lacks an arguable basis in either law or fact." Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 328 (1989); Denton v. Hernandez, 504 U.S. 25, 31 (1992). An action is malicious if it is undertaken for the purpose of harassing the named defendants and not for the purpose of vindicating a cognizable right. Spencer v. Rhodes, 656 F. Supp. 458, 461-63 (E.D.N.C. 1987), aff'd 826 F.2d 1059 (4th Cir. 1987). A complaint fails to state a claim if it does not plead "enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face." Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007).

The Complaint

Plaintiff brings this action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Named as defendants are the Moberly Correctional Center ("MCC"), Unknown Massey (Correctional Officer, MCC), and Unknown Belles (same). Plaintiff alleges, in a wholly conclusory manner, that Massey assaulted him and that Belles did not protect him. Plaintiff claims that Massey assaulted him in retaliation

for his having filed grievances against Massey.

Discussion

A suit against MCC is, in effect, a suit against the State of Missouri. The State of Missouri, however, is absolutely immune from liability under § 1983. See Will v. Michigan Dept. of State Police, 491 U.S. 58, 63 (1989). As a result, plaintiff's claim against MCC is legally frivolous.

The complaint is silent as to whether defendants Massey or Belles are being sued in their official or individual capacities. Where a "complaint is silent about the capacity in which [plaintiff] is suing defendant, [a district court must] interpret the complaint as including only official-capacity claims." Egerdahl v. Hibbing Community College, 72 F.3d 615, 619 (8th Cir. 1995); Nix v. Norman, 879 F.2d 429, 431 (8th Cir. 1989). Naming a government official in his or her official capacity is the equivalent of naming the government entity that employs the official, in this case the State of Missouri. Will v. Michigan Dep't of State Police, 491 U.S. 58, 71 (1989). "[N]either a State nor its officials acting in their official capacity are 'persons' under § 1983." Id. As a result, the complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted as to defendants Massey and Belles.

Finally, a civil rights complaint must contain enough facts to state a claim as a matter of law and must not be merely conclusory. Frey v. City of Herculaneum, 44 F.3d 667, 671 (8th Cir. 1995). Plaintiff only alleges that Massey "assaulted" him and that Belles "failed to protect" him. These are legal conclusions. To state a claim under § 1983, plaintiff must describe the facts of the assault, such as how it happened and whether plaintiff was injured.

Because plaintiff is proceeding pro se, the Court will allow plaintiff to file an amended complaint. Plaintiff shall have thirty days from the date of this Order to file an amended complaint. Plaintiff is warned that the filing of an amended complaint replaces the original

complaint, and claims that are not realleged are deemed abandoned. E.g., In re Wireless Telephone Federal Cost Recovery Fees Litigation, 396 F.3d 922, 928 (8th Cir. 2005). In drafting the amended complaint, plaintiff must describe the facts that led to his injury, and he must state whether he is suing defendants in their individual capacities, official capacities, or both. If plaintiff fails to file an amended complaint within thirty days, the Court will dismiss this action without prejudice.

Accordingly,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that plaintiff's motion to proceed in forma pauperis [ECF No. 2] is **GRANTED**.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the plaintiff shall pay an initial filing fee of \$4.40 within thirty (30) days of the date of this Order. Plaintiff is instructed to make his remittance payable to "Clerk, United States District Court," and to include upon it: (1) his name; (2) his prison registration number; (3) the case number; and (4) that the remittance is for an original proceeding. If plaintiff does not timely pay the fee, the Court will dismiss this action without prejudice.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Clerk shall mail to plaintiff a Prisoner Civil Rights Complaint form.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that plaintiff may file an amended complaint on the form within the next thirty (30) days. If plaintiff does not file an amended complaint, the Court will dismiss this action without prejudice.

Dated this 28th day of February, 2014.

/s/Shirley Padmore Mensah
SHIRLEY PADMORE MENSAH
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE